

Application
for
United States Patent

To all whom it may concern:

*Be it known that, Jonathan David Gadson and David Wayne Gadson have invented
certain new and useful improvements in*

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR STORING AND COVERING FOOTWEAR

of which the following is a description:

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR STORING AND COVERING
FOOTWEAR**

PRIORITY

[0001] This application claims priority to the provisional U.S. patent application entitled, SHOE STORAGE COVER, filed February 24, 2003, having a serial number 60/449,119, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to protecting surface finishes of objects and storing the objects accordingly. More particularly, the present invention relates to a method and apparatus for covering and storing footwear in order to promote surface shine and protection from surface blemishes such as scuff marks. The present invention also relates to a method and apparatus for protecting footwear from the introduction of and exposure to foreign objects such as dust, dirt, insects, and/or small animals.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] It may not be uncommon for surfaces of footwear, such as shoes or boots, to become blemished, for instance, from coming into contact with foreign objects via general use and activity. By way of example, it may be possible for such foreign objects to scuff a surface or plurality of surfaces of the footwear. Should the surface of the footwear contain a degree of luster, a

reduction of shine could occur during the aforementioned contact.

Additionally, a stored article of footwear, such as a shoe or boot, may lose a state of shine/polish due to foreign articles which could cover its surface such as dust, for example. Hence, it could be desirable to protect a surface of the footwear from being subjected to foreign articles which could further compromise the surface of the shoe directly or the integrity of its surface shine.

Additionally, it could be further desirable to restore a surface of footwear, such as provided by a shoe or boot, for example, to a cleaned state within a variety of applications.

[0004] The military may provide an exemplary environment for which it may be generally desirable for military personnel to maintain clean dress shoes and/or boots as part of their military uniform. Over a period of time, these dress shoes and/or boots may become scuffed or dirty, for instance, due to general use or through direct physical activity. Thus it may become necessary to clean and/or shine the surface of the footwear, whether a dress shoe or boot, for example, in order to restore its luster to a surface thereof.

[0005] One such method for cleaning the footwear surface may simply entail wiping the surface, for instance, with a rag or cloth material. The cleaning process may be further expanded to include additional operations conducive to obtaining or restoring the sheen of the footwear. These additional steps may include an application of shoe polish. In addition, a buffing action may be applied to the footwear. Such buffing action may be

provided via a series of brushed strokes utilizing a device such as a shoe brush, for example. The shoe brush may contain bristles generally comprised of any of a variety of elements having desired brush characteristics including, for instance, boar hair, horse hair, camel hair, and the like. If desired, a liquid element such as water may also be applied to the surface of the footwear in an effort to mix the liquid in with the applied shoe polish. This procedure, generally known as a "spit shine", may provide additional shine to the surface of the footwear during a polishing procedure. Alternatively, or in combination thereof, a rag may be utilized to facilitate buffing the surface of the footwear in order to promote shine to the surface thereof. The rag may be selected from a variety of materials including, for instance, cotton, nylon, polyester, and the like, based upon a particularly suited polishing application.

[0006] After the surfaces of the shoe or boot are polished it may be likely that they will generally contain a degree of shine. Such a shine may be desirable to members of the military, for instance, who may be required to have cleaned/shined shoes for inspection. In another application, a corporate executive, for instance, may desire to have readily available shined shoes for appearance sake. In yet another application, members of sports teams may desire to have well maintained and clean sports shoes having generally unblemished surfaces which may further coordinate with their uniforms to promote a tidy appearance.

[0007] However, it may be possible for the surface or degree of shine

of a surface to become blemished under certain conditions. These conditions may include, for example, transporting the footwear from one location to another. A manner in which the shoe or boot can be transported could include, for example, a suitcase, a box, a gym bag, or simply via hand-carrying. During transportation, it could be possible to scuff a surface of the footwear, for instance, by dropping an unprotected surface of the shoe onto the ground.

[0008] Another manner in which the surface could be scuffed may include the shoe surface coming into contact with another article. For instance, if the shoe or boot were located in a container such as a suitcase, a box, a bag, it could be possible for any other article(s) located therein to come into contact with the surface of the footwear as the container is moved during transport.

[0009] Another concern may be to the foreign articles themselves since polished footwear surfaces could smudge polish on these articles and blemish their appearance. This may be importance with respect to protecting articles of clothing or paperwork, for examples, from becoming smudged with polish received from inserted footwear. Additionally, the container surfaces themselves may potentially provide a surface to which a footwear surface may contact and, hence, become scuffed or blemished. Furthermore, a person hand-carrying a shoe or boot may inadvertently strike a surface of a foreign object with an unprotected surface of the footwear during transportation. Thus, an unprotected footwear surface may be susceptible to being scuffed

during the transport thereof.

[0010] It may also be necessary to store a polished footwear article, such as a shoe or boot, for example, for future use. As the footwear is being stored, it may still be possible for another article to come into contact with a polished surface of the footwear resulting in a scuff or blemish to the polished surface. Incidents, such as storing/placing other articles (perhaps another pair of shoes) on top of the polished footwear or falling objects, may be examples of such aforementioned contact. Furthermore, stored surfaces of a polished footwear may be susceptible to the introduction of and/or exposure to foreign objections such as dust, dirt, insects and/or small animals. One example of where dust could collect on surfaces of footwear may include closet areas or locker room storage bins. An example in which insects may be introduced into the cavity portion of the footwear may include moths, crickets, ants, and the like. For military personnel, their footwear may be susceptible to insects and small animals when they are out on field training exercises. Hence, there may be a need to provide footwear protection to protect surfaces of footwear and to prevent entrance of foreign objects into the cavity of the footwear.

[0011] Accordingly, it is desirable to provide a method and apparatus that covers and stores footwear in order to promote surface shine and protection from surface blemishes such as scuff marks. It is further desirable to provide a method and apparatus for protecting footwear from the introduction of and exposure to foreign objects such as dust, dirt, insects,

and/or small animals.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] The foregoing needs are met, to a great extent, by the present invention, wherein in one aspect a method and apparatus is provided that in some embodiments facilitates coverage and protection of footwear articles. In another aspect a method and apparatus is provided that in some embodiments facilitates transporting and storing footwear articles accordingly.

[0013] In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, an apparatus for providing coverage and storage of footwear is provided that in some embodiments includes a first unitary piece having a first unitary lower peripheral edge and a first unitary upper peripheral edge, a second unitary piece having an outer peripheral edge, wherein the outer peripheral edge is attached to the lower peripheral edge of the first unitary piece. The apparatus may also provide an opening and closing mechanism attached to the upper peripheral edge of the first unitary piece.

[0014] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, a method of covering and storing footwear is provided that in some embodiments includes providing a first unitary piece having a first unitary lower peripheral edge and a first unitary upper peripheral edge, providing a second unitary piece having an outer peripheral edge and attaching the outer peripheral edge of the second unitary piece to the lower peripheral edge of the first unitary piece to

generally form a cavity within the attached pieces. The method may also include providing an opening and closing mechanism and placing the opening and closing mechanism over the cavity and attaching the mechanism to the upper peripheral edge of the first unitary piece. An article of footwear may be inserted into the cavity via the mechanism in an open position. The article of footwear may be further secured within the cavity by closing the mechanism.

[0015] In accordance with yet another embodiment aspect of the present invention, a system for covering and storing footwear is provided that in some embodiments includes a first unitary piece having a first unitary lower peripheral edge and a first unitary upper peripheral edge and a second unitary piece having an outer peripheral edge. The system may also provide means for attaching the outer peripheral edge of the second unitary piece to the lower peripheral edge of the first unitary piece to generally form a cavity within the attached pieces, means for opening and closing the cavity and means for attaching the opening and closing means over the cavity and to the upper peripheral edge of the first unitary piece.

[0016] There has thus been outlined, rather broadly, certain embodiments of the invention in order that the detailed description thereof herein may be better understood, and in order that the present contribution to the art may be better appreciated. There are, of course, additional embodiments of the invention that will be described below and which will form the subject matter of the claims appended hereto.

[0017] In this respect, before explaining at least one embodiment of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and to the arrangements of the

components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of embodiments in addition to those described and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein, as well as the abstract, are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

[0018] As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception upon which this disclosure is based may readily be utilized as a basis for the designing of other structures, methods and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It is important, therefore, that the claims be regarded as including such equivalent constructions insofar as they do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] FIG. 1 is a side view of an article of footwear which may be used with a preferred embodiment of the invention.

[0020] FIG. 2 is a perspective view illustrating an exemplary preferred configuration of a footwear storage cover according to one embodiment of the invention..

[0021] FIG. 3 is a top plan view of a sole portion according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0022] FIG. 4 is a bottom plan view of a right shoe cover member lower peripheral edge and a left shoe cover member lower peripheral edge according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0023] FIG. 5 is a perspective view illustrating an article of footwear in use with a preferred configuration of the footwear storage cover of FIG. 2.

[0024] FIG. 6 is a tab portion which may be used in combination with the

footwear storage cover according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0025] FIG. 7 illustrates a carrying strap which may be used in combination with the footwear storage cover according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0026] FIG. 8 is a perspective view illustrating a carrying strap in use with a preferred configuration of the footwear storage cover of FIG. 2.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0027] An embodiment in accordance with the present invention provides a method and apparatus that in some embodiments provides promotion of surface shine and protection to footwear articles such as shoes or boots. The invention will now be described with reference to the drawing figures, in which like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout.

[0028] An article of footwear 10 is shown in FIG. 1. For simplicity and for illustrative purposes, a description of the footwear 10 will be generally denoted as a dress shoe. However, it should be understood that the footwear may be of the type including sporting shoes, boots, pumps, sandals, and the like utilized for men's, women's, or children's shoes. The article of footwear 10 preferably consists of a sole 12, a toe portion 26 and a heel portion 16. The heel portion 16 traverses upwardly through a counter section 18 towards an ankle support area 20. The footwear 10 generally provides a vamp area 22 which generally extends and covers a plug area 24 and into the toe area 26. The footwear 10 may also provide a tongue area 27 and a shoe cavity 30.

[0029] An embodiment of the present inventive apparatus is illustrated

in FIG. 2. A footwear storage cover 28 is shown generally comprising a right shoe cover member 30 having an upper peripheral edge 32 and a lower peripheral edge 39 (also shown in FIG. 4). The footwear storage cover 28 also generally comprises a left shoe cover member 34 having an upper peripheral edge 36 and a lower peripheral edge 37 (shown in FIG. 4). The right shoe cover member 30 and the left shoe cover member 34 preferably meet at a joint section 36 generally running from a shoe cover heel section 38 upwardly to a back angle area 40 of the footwear storage cover 28. Thus, the right shoe cover member 30 and the left shoe cover member 34 generally form a first single unitary piece.

[0030] A sole portion 35 forms a second single unitary piece. As shown in FIG. 3, the sole portion 35 preferably has an outer peripheral edge 37. In a preferred embodiment the outer peripheral edge 37 of the sole portion 35 is generally attached to the lower peripheral edge 37 of the left shoe cover member 34 and the lower peripheral edge 39 of the right shoe cover member 30. The preferable attachment method may include sewing the peripheral edge 37 of the sole portion 35 to the lower left peripheral edge 37 and the lower right peripheral edge 39 such that a single uniform footwear storage cover 28 is formed.

[0031] Most preferably, the right shoe cover member 30, the left shoe cover member 34, and the sole portion 35 comprise a combination of nylon and lycra material more generally known as Spandex. In a preferred

embodiment, the composition of material consists of approximately 93% nylon and 7% lycra. This combination preferably provides a desired amount of elasticity to the footwear storage cover 28 while providing a generally snug fit.

The combination also tends to promote shine to footwear materials as described below. These materials also allow an inserted article of footwear 10 to breathe through the fabric in order to release any moisture within the footwear. This, in turn, could reduce odors and fungi development within the footwear. A further advantage of utilizing the preferred materials may include low cost to manufacture and obtain materials along with low distribution costs. Finally, the materials of the preferred invention are generally easy to maintain and clean, for instance, by washing and reusing a successive amount of times.

[0032] Thus, the stretch material of the preferred invention may accommodate a wide variety of sizes and shapes of articles of footwear 10. The flexibility of material in accordance with the preferred invention may also prove advantageous for folding and storing in compact storage spaces such as a carrying case or the pocket of a user. The composition of material itself may be useful for generating and promoting a shine or luster to the surface of an article of footwear 10. This, at least in part, may be due to the desired composition of preferred material of the footwear storage cover 28 design. Due to the inherent properties of the nylon and/or lycra material preferably utilized in the composition of the footwear storage cover 28, surfaces of an inserted article of footwear will generally contact the surface of the footwear

storage cover 28 in a frictional manner. This action can promote shine of the contacted surfaces of footwear because a buffing action may be produced.

Additionally, if the article of footwear 10 is slidably engaged within the footwear storage cover 28, for instance, during transport of the footwear, more frictional contact may occur and, again, promote shine to the footwear surface. Finally, when an article of footwear 10 is removed from the footwear storage cover 28, frictional engagement between the footwear 10 and the cover 28 may occur to produce another opportunity to generate luster to the footwear surface.

[0033] The preferred materials of the footwear storage cover 28 may be designed in a variety of styles and include visual effects. Thus, it may be desired to design the footwear storage cover 28 with differing colors, designs, and styles in accordance with predetermined specifications and applications. An example of one design may include matching the color of the footwear storage cover 28 to the colors of an athletic team's uniform. It may be desired to design logos into the material of the footwear storage cover 28. Transparent and semi transparent colors may be included in the design of materials as an application. Thus, many visual effects may be utilized.

[0034] A tab 44 may be generally affixed to the footwear storage cover 28. In a preferred embodiment, the tab 44 is affixed generally along joint 36 near the back angle area 40. A hoop portion 46 may be provided on the tab 44 to allow additional members to connect to the footwear storage cover 28. Such members may include a connector such as a D-ring 48 (shown in FIG. 5).

This connector may be useful for retaining additional items to the tab 44, such as keys or another shoe located within the footwear storage cover 28.

Alternatively, the hoop portion 46 may be used in combination with a portable hook member 50 to facilitate carrying an inserted shoe within the footwear storage cover 28. Another use of the hoop portion 46 may include hanging the loop portion 46 on a fixed hook (not shown) in order to facilitate storing an inserted footwear article within the footwear storage cover 28.

[0035] In another embodiment, the tab 44 may generally be designed as a reinforced strip of material affixed to the footwear storage cover 28 as shown, for instance, in FIG 6. The tab 44 is represented as a pull tab to assist in pulling the footwear storage cover 28 over an article of footwear 10 and may facilitate efforts to remove the footwear storage cover 28 from the article of footwear 10.

[0036] In another embodiment, a secondary hanging loop 52 may be provided and affixed to the footwear storage cover 28. As shown, for instance in FIG. 2., the secondary hanging loop 52 can be connected to the footwear storage cover 28 at a heel section cover location 38. However, it should be understood that the secondary hanging loop 52 may be affixed to the footwear storage cover 28 generally at another location in accordance with its general use and/or preference.

[0037] Preferably, an opening and closing mechanism is attached to the upper right peripheral edge 32 and the upper left peripheral edge 36. The

opening and closing mechanism may be selected from a variety of products such as laces, Velcro material, button or snap assemblies or an interlocking mechanism. In a preferred embodiment, an interlocking mechanism 42, such as a zipper assembly having a zipper tab 64 is shown. In some embodiments, the interlocking mechanism 42 may be sewn into the material of the upper right peripheral edge 32 and the upper left peripheral edge 36. With the interlocking mechanism 42, such as a zipper assembly, attached to the footwear storage cover 28, an inner cavity 56 generally comprising a throat portion 58, a tongue portion 60, and a toe portion 62 is formed with the interlocking mechanism 42 in an open position as shown, for instance, in FIG. 2. A zipper tab 64 may be utilized to close the zipper assembly to secure and enclose an article of footwear 10 inserted within the inner cavity 56 as shown in FIG. 5. In a closed position, the footwear storage cover 28 may shield the article of footwear 10 from coverage of foreign particles such as dust or dirt. Additionally, the footwear storage cover 28 protects the surface of the article of footwear 10 from blemishes such as scuff marks and/or scratches. Furthermore, the zippered closing may assist in reducing escaping footwear odors and limit the entrance of insects and small animals.

[0038] In a preferred embodiment, the toe 26 of an article of footwear 10 is generally inserted through the cavity 56 and into the toe portion 62 of the footwear storage cover 28. The footwear storage cover 28 may be grasped, for example by the tab 44, to draw the footwear storage cover 28 rearward and

back towards the heel 16, thus, covering the sole 12 of the article of footwear 10. The footwear storage cover 28 may then be pulled upwardly over the heel 16 to traverse the rear breast of the counter section 18 of the article of footwear 10. The interlocking mechanism 42 may be subsequently closed in order to secure the article of footwear 10 within the footwear storage cover 28.

[0039] FIG. 7. illustrates a carrying strap 66 which may be used with another embodiment of the footwear storage cover 28 of the present invention. The carrying strap 66 may be comprised of a fabric material suitable for supporting an article of footwear 10 during transport. In a preferred embodiment, the carrying strap 66 has an overlapped connection portion 70 located at its ends 71 thereof. The overlapped connection portion 70 preferably form connector channels 72 to receive connectors such as D-Rings 48 or hook attachments.

[0040] FIG. 8 shows the carrying strap 66 in combination with the footwear storage cover 28. In a preferred embodiment, the carrying strap 66 traverses the cavity 56 of the footwear storage cover 28 generally at the instep location 74. The carrying strap 66 may be removably attached to the footwear storage cover 28 for example, by Velcro adhesion, glue, threaded connection, snap buttons or the like. Slit openings 76 may be provided in the right shoe cover 30 and the left shoe cover member 34 to accommodate receiving the D-Rings 48 of the carrying strap 66. Positioned in the aforementioned manner, the footwear storage cover 28 may be retained via the D-Rings of the carrying

strap 66. The D-rings 48 of the carrying strap 66 may be retained by a plurality of devices including, for instance, hooks, additional D-Rings, strings, and a host of other objects functioning, for example, as connectors.

Alternatively, the carrying strap 66 may be used to wrap around an outside surface of the footwear storage cover 28 containing an article of footwear 10 to quickly mount up the footwear and either store or mount or transport the article accordingly.

[0041] Although an example of the footwear storage cover 28 is shown retaining articles of footwear 10, it will be appreciated that other items can also be retained by the footwear storage cover 28 such as keys, credit cards, currency, make-up, wallets, and other objects exclusive of footwear. Also, although the footwear storage cover 28 is useful to retain and protect articles in the footwear industry, it can also be used mount objects to a stand or plaque, for instance, within the display industry.

[0042] The many features and advantages of the invention are apparent from the detailed specification, and thus, it is intended by the appended claims to cover all such features and advantages of the invention which fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and variations will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation illustrated and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.